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The history of Sino-English relations during the nineteenth century has been polarized to the point where uninformed readers might actually imagine that Westerners who traveled to China were in fact "foreign devils" whose unyielding jingoism prevented them from recognizing the admirable aspects of Chinese society. Certainly the settlements at the end of the Opium Wars and the privilege of extraterritoriality encouraged Chinese officials to adopt extremist perspectives. Nevertheless, within the international settlement of Shanghai, Chinese and Westerners cooperated with each other at least for entrepreneurial undertakings. Shanghai has often been portrayed as a city of corruption and decadence. Since the 1870's more than half of the opium imported into China entered through Shanghai.[1] Men of all ages squandered their savings gambling in the countless opium dens of Shanghai. The city also had a reputation for being the prostitution capital of East Asia. The gangsters were notorious for their cruelty and closely-knit networks of organized crime.

Ironically, Shanghai also attracted the most progressively-minded men in the country who were open to many of the new ideas that were flowing into China from Europe and the United States. Many of these individuals had failed the highest levels of the civil service examination and flocked to the international settlements where they sold their literary skills to various journals and newspaper industries. The insights and scholarly expertise of these men are reflected in the articles they wrote on current events, philosophy and religion. Their critical stance toward the Buddhist sangha and the clergy in particular are revealing because they reveal a perspective that has not been emphasized in previous histories on Chinese Buddhism that were written in the past three or four decades. General histories expounding upon the evolution of a given religion are quite influential because scholars as well as non-specialists rely on them when there is less information in English on a particular historical period. Unfortunately, studies on Chinese Buddhism that cover the developments of the last two millennia have been shaped by the hagiography, the imperial court's relation to the sangha and sectarian biases. In periods where there is less material published in English such as during the early stages of Chinese

[1] Dong 2001, p. 53.

modernization, the names of a few eminent monks and lay figures tend to overshadow popular perspectives that are essential for understanding the social history of the late Qing period.

In many of the standard accounts on the history of Chinese Buddhism, the late Qing is portrayed as a brief period of Buddhist revival among intellectuals and the lay community. During the catastrophic events of the mid-nineteenth century that ended in the Taiping uprisings, Chinese Buddhism as a whole suffered one of the most systematic persecutions. The Taiping leaders tried to put an end to all forms of idolatrous worship by destroying Buddhist images, libraries, and temples in the areas they controlled.[2] After the Qing armies had defeated the rebels, a group of lay Buddhists led by Yang Wenhui (1837-1911) advocated the reliance on Buddhist doctrine and practice to help sustain the weakened Manchu regime. As an official who had studied Western science in his younger years, Yang argued that Buddhism rather than Confucianism was more suitable for challenging the rational positivistic thinking of the West. By setting up study centers Yang hoped that lay believers and intellectuals would realize the depth of *Weishilun* (*The Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-Only*) and *Yingmin* (*Hetuvidya*) texts which emphasized the importance of Buddhist logic and epistemology.[3] As the general histories of Chinese Buddhism point out, Yang argued that since Western civilization was based upon Christian principles, the spiritual teachings of Buddhism were more likely to become the foundation for modern China. In hindsight one sees that Yang's ideals could not have been realized in the following decades that were dominated by warlords and revolutionaries. Nevertheless, scholars of Buddhist history claim that Yang inspired men who advocated drastic reform of the Manchu regime such as Kang Youwei (1858-1927), Liao Zhiqiao (1873-1929), Tan Citong (1868-1898).[4] These men proposed a series of reforms that elevated the role of Buddhism as the guiding force for a more egalitarian society, but the Hundred Days' Reform at the end of the 19th century ultimately failed.

According Kenneth Ch'en, the revival of Buddhism after the holocaust was brought about mainly through the dedicated leadership of a few men who were not formally ordained. Chen claims that the transfer of leadership from monks to the lay community was the culmination of Hinayana to Mahayana.[5] As convincing as such

[2] Ch'en 1972, p. 448.
[3] Hetuvidya refers to an ancient Indian logic that was used for determining right from wrong, truth from falsehood.
[4] Cao and Sueki 1996, pp. 15-16.
[5] Ch'en 1972, pp. 448-49.

views may seem, the perceptions of Chinese Buddhism in the nineteenth century have been affected by revisionist interpretations of late imperial China which have received more attention during the past decade. Until recently the Manchu rulers were considered to be foreigners whose culture was vastly different from the Han Chinese. The standard argument was that alien rulers were only able to rule China for centuries by adopting Chinese culture, religion and institutions. The Qing dynasty was believed to have come to an end because of the Manchu's military incompetence and their inability to combat Western and Japanese imperialism.[6]

The advocates of the New Qing history explain that the reasons why many scholars of late imperial China made sweeping generalizations about the nature of religion and other subjects was due to their overreliance on Chinese language sources which theorized that throughout Chinese history foreign occupation was possible only through assimilation. The scholars who are compiling the New Qing history argue that though the Manchus were Sinocized to a significant degree, they maintained their own language and particularly with regards to religion, they used Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism to reinforce their political supremacy while monitoring Chinese Buddhist sectarianism.

Examining the Manchu court's relation to the various sects and what they regarded as heterodox gives us a better understanding of Manchu rule and the cultural dynamics of the Qing dynasty. At the same time it is essential to examine the popular perceptions of Buddhism during the colonial period, so that the works of prominent lay figures do not overshadow the complex developments of Buddhism. The pictorials that are the main sources for this study were published in Shanghai during the later half of the 19th century. They provide examples of the kind of Buddhist practices, teachings and beliefs that were known to the local populace at the time. Naturally, the voice of the periphery sometimes never existed, but the vignettes at least provide us with a sense of how the urban center perceived what was occurring throughout the vast Qing empire. "Buddhism has unfortunately often been studied outside of history, and while this oversight is now being addressed, the imaginary ideal of Buddhist rule as an explanatory model still remains."[7]

The journalists who wrote the vignettes that appeared in the Shanghai pictorials were given an unusual amount of freedom by the standards of the times. Not surprisingly, they could not make critical statements about the Manchu regime, but since these men worked in the international settlement, they had more protection

[6] Waley-Cohen 2006, pp. 5-6.
[7] Elverskog 2006, p. 11.

than most intellectuals. Before the appearance of the Shanghai newspaper *Shenbao*, newspapers in China were mainly written by Christian missionaries in Canton, Hong Kong and Macao. Since there were large foreign populations residing in the treaty ports, more than two hundred newspaper titles appeared before the turn of the century.[8] Widely read periodicals such as the *North China Herald* and the *China Mail* were thought to represent the general opinion of the colonial powers, though the articles were often quite personal in tone and in their criticism of the imperial court. These foreign language newspapers claimed that "they were the voice of a community, of some sections of a community, or sometimes, of the whole British or American nation. These claims cannot be accepted uncritically."[9]

Despite the clearly justified attacks and denunciations that have been made against English journalism on late imperial China, Earnest Major, the founder of the *Shenbao* and the extremely popular pictorial, *Dianshizhai huabao*, was unusual for allowing criticism against English institutions and cultural traditions in his newspaper's articles.[10] Having worked in China since the 1860's in the tea business, Major and his friends ventured into journalism and established quite a unique medium for news.[11]

The form of these pictorials were actually inspired by European illustrated magazines such as the *Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic,* but the style of the drawings were very much modeled after the tradition of the Ming-Qing novel and short story illustrations.[12] Conventional elements of literati painting such as venerable trees with gnarled limbs and ancient rocks that grow out of the ground were used in scenes of scholarly amusement in the *Dianshizhai* and *Feiyingge* pictorials.

One characteristic that stands out in these vignettes is the fact that various heterodox sects were hunted down by officials and the police. Many of the commentaries in the *Feiyingge* pictorial describe how the members of these sects

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[8] Fang 1981, p. 10.

[9] Clarke and King 1965, p. 5.

[10] Li 2005.
There have been some scholars such as Li Yansheng who feel that the Major's *Shenbao* was no different from the other conservative Western newspapers that were circulated in the treaty ports. Admittedly, there was a profit seeking element to the newspaper, but unlike the other publications, Major was able to popularize his newspaper to a much wider Chinese audience. For further details of the author's argument, see the first few chapters of Li Yansheng's *Zhongguo baokan tushi*. [A History of Chinese Newspaper Illustrations], Wuhan : Hubei renmin chubanshe, 2005.

[11] Wan 2005, p. 238.

[12] Henningsmeier 1998.

were arrested. The problem for modern readers is that the sects that were considered to be a threat were virtually indistinguishable from legitimate Buddhist sects and incorporated many Buddhist practices in their rituals. These cults and sects which the state tried to eradicate clearly had strong Buddhist and Taoist elements in their core beliefs. The groups that were persecuted by Manchu authorities such as the Hongyang the White Lotus sects dedicated offerings to "buddha" images, recited sutras and organized assemblies. Some masters cured illnesses while others were called in by their nonsectarian neighbors to chant scriptures at funerals.[13] Even though their teachings included concepts such as the Four Noble Truths and the law of karmic causality, the state considered them to be secret societies. The problem was that as more sects were added to the list of illegal groups, even Buddhist sects and various lay organizations became suspect in the eyes of officials. Forming networks of followers, gathering disciples, and assembling after dark and the possession of unusual scriptures could all be labeled as suspicious activities. The very act of making incantations, chanting, meditating, avoiding meat and fish, burning incense or soliciting donations could be charged as heterodox practices. The necessity for a low public profile shaped the structure and nature of Qing Buddhism and hampered the development of permanent and public religious institutions."[14] These persecutions encouraged anti-Buddhist sentiment which is prevalent in the pictorials of Shanghai. With the exception of Lamaism or Tibetan-Buddhism, the court seemed less inclined to support the Buddhist clergy.

The Manchu Court and Tibetan Buddhism

Although the division of state and popular Buddhism is outdated and superficial in general, for the Manchu regime this division was quite useful. The journalists of 19th century pictorials were often critical toward the Buddhist clergy. But with regards to Tibetan Buddhism most vignettes adopt a reverent tone. As Susan Naquin points out, the Lamaism that the Manchus espoused was quite alien to the form of Buddhism that the Han people practiced. Local Chinese were not encouraged to participate in Lamaist rituals and the clergy followed their own calendar of rights. The lamas were not allowed to travel like other Chinese monks and could not own any property. Nevertheless, since they were supported by the imperial court, they could maintain their separate identity and in some cases became quite affluent. For Han Chinese who were visiting Beijing from the provinces the sight of lamas in

[13] Naquin 2000, p. 594.
[14] Ibid., p. 592.

their ochre robes and yellow head gear uttering sutras in their low hypnotic tones would not have failed to attract attention. Overall, Tibetan Buddhism as a whole was interesting and strange (*qi*) at the same time.[15]

One of the vignettes entitled "A Lama Makes Pilgrimages to the Sacred Mountains" honors an exceptional lama called Puan who came from a blue banner family in inner Mongolia.

> Princes and officials, commoners and poor scholars all knew his name. There was no one among those who practiced the Buddhist teachings who did not respect him. In fact Puan was regarded as a living Buddha. When important personages among the Mongolian laity could not travel far, they asked eminent monks to visit the famous mountains in their place. By performing important rituals Puan increased his reputation. At every mountain that Puan visited he burned an incense mark on his arm. Among all of these pilgrimages the most difficult mountain path by far was Mt. Wudang's "One Line Bridge." This naturally sculpted stone bridge is approximately thirty meters in length and thirty centimeters wide. The bridge has no rail and drops sharply into the gorge below. When Puan arrived at the spot, he simply put on his boots and walked across as if he were on level ground. The monks of mountain temple of Mt. Wudang were astonished and regarded Puan as an immortal.

Contrary to what has been mentioned about lamas not being permitted to travel freely, this lama traveled to various sacred mountains. Such hagiographic accounts seldom appeared in late Qing pictorials, which were critical of all forms of religion.

Domesticating a multiethnic empire through diverse cultural traditions required shrewd political maneuvering, but the early Qing rulers were able to solidify their authority over Tibet and Mongolia by incorporating Tibetan Buddhist deities in their religious rituals. The Manchus studied Khubilai Khan's precedents to see how the Mongols had cultivated good relations with the senior Tibetan prelate during the thirteenth century, because they recognized that appropriating the heritage of the great Khans would reduce the likelihood of Mongol rebellions. As the Manchus had anticipated, after two centuries of rule by the later half of the nineteenth century the Mongols had adopted the form of Qing Buddhism that the court was promoting. Tibetan language material was used in Mongol rituals and Mongol Buddhist monks performed ceremonies for protective deities in Beijing or hiearchs in Drepung

[15] Naquin 2000, pp. 584-88.

monastery in Lhasa instead of honoring their own deities. By the late Qing it was clear that the sacred beings of the Mongols had become subordinate to Tibetan Buddhist deities.[16]

This process of assimilation would not have been possible without the establishment of the lama-patron relationship. "Both the Manchu court and the Dalai Lama were aware of the potential dangers of religiopolitical fragmentation resulting from multiple Buddhist schools being allied with local rulers."[17] Before the Dalai Lama met the new conquers of China, his own power base was not secure.[18] After the Fifth Dalai Lama made a formal visit to the Manchu Emperor in 1652, other sectarian leaders who exerted influence in Inner Mongolia and other regions were purged. In return the Dalai Lama recognized the emperor as supreme patron. This change in relations allowed Qing emperors to be identified as living incarnations of the bodhisattva Manjusri.[19]

Undoubtedly Lamaism was an effective value system for asserting universal dominion over the Manchu empire. Tibetan Buddhist state ceremonies in which Sanskrit texts were worshiped by chanting lamas and attendants playing horns were performed for days on a grand scale during the Chinese new year.[20] On special years in which the Manchus extended their imperial conquests, war illustrations were made showing the emperor and generals leading troops into battle, which were hung in old pavilions. Monuments were also inscribed in Manchu, Chinese, Mongol, Tibetan and even Uighur to manifest the emperor's authority over the multiple ethnic groups. Yet as these warrior emperors aged, they hoped to be remembered as peaceful sovereigns who dedicated themselves tirelessly to promoting the dharma. As Joanna Waley-Cohen observed, "They [the Manchu emperors] held themselves out as Confucian sage rulers of China whose authority derived from their benevolence, learning, and moral virtue while in another, they drew variously on the traditions of Inner Asia, as represented chiefly by Mongolia and Tibet, to represent themselves as warrior-khans, and, under Buddhist influence, as turners of the wheel of time toward salvation and the closing of the ages."[21]

In most of the vignettes that appear in the late Qing pictorials of Shanghai, the journalists criticized the decadence of the Buddhist clergy. Many vignettes deal with

[16] Elverskog 2006, p. 121.
[17] Ibid., p. 104.
[18] Yamaguchi Zuiho, pp. 1-28.
[19] Waley-Cohen 2006, p. 52.
[20] Naquin 2000, p. 587.
[21] Waley-Cohen 2006, p. 2.

how Buddhist monks and nuns extorted money. In one of the vignettes entitled "A Dead Monk Receives Alms" an unidentified journalist explains how a group of Buddhist monks decided to solicit in the Wuhu area. To collect enough money they took the body of their deceased master and somehow embalmed him and venerated the monk as a bodhisattva. The disciples put their master in a boat and a long line of people came to pray, bow and offer incense while the monks took advantage of the opportunity to solicit donations. "Good men and women opened their purse strings and generously gave money in exchange for the Buddha's protection. And after several days the incense cabinet was filled with smoke and the body took on an appearance that made him seem alive."

The literati were not only critical of monks who resorted to clever methods, but toward the masses who they regarded as foolish and ignorant. The editors of Shanghai pictorials admonished those who could not distinguish between genuine spirituality and profit seeking monks. "Commoners" attachments to religious idols is a reoccurring theme. The journalists condescendingly point out that the obsessive offerings of commoners were misdirected and actually do little good for improving the lives of worshipers. The narratives show how little understanding people had about the god or deity they were directing their prayers toward. To most people, it made little difference whether the god they were worshiping was a Buddhist deity, Daoist god, Confucian sage or perhaps one of the sectarian gods that was banned by the state.

As Ye Xiaoqing suggests "worship of idols of no particular recognized religious affiliation was a typical aspect of heterodox religion. In 1891 the *Dianshizhai* reported the case of the magistrate in Yangzhou discovering local people worshipping a nameless idol, apparently neither Daoist nor Buddhist in origin. The idol was immediately burned."[22] One of the more humorous vignettes in the *Dianshizhai* stated that there were two stone statues that stood to the west of the race track in Shanghai. These figures had originally guarded the entrance to a grave about ten *li* from Shanghai, but a Western entrepreneur had bought them for forty two *yuan*, and relocated these figures in the city as decorative statuary. A group of Shanghai residences believed that these were bodhisattvas and started burning incense in front of them. "The number of worshippers swelled to a flood, and the lower halves of the statues became blackened with the accumulated soot from the candles and incense. The settlement authorities issued an official notice emphasizing that the statues were gods, but to no avail. Eventually in the interests of efficient

[22] Ye 2003, p. 189.

traffic and public order, the statues were moved elsewhere."[23]

The skepticism of these journalists is comparable to the anti-religious sentiments of the European enlightenment. The literati who resided in the International Settlement were critical of Buddhist beliefs and rituals as they were of Daoist charms and fortune telling. When narrating incidents involving fully or partially ordained monks stirring up trouble, the journalists would often censure Buddhist and Daoist monks together. In "Lay Monks are Ordained" a wandering Buddhist mendicant, Daoist monk and a beggar afflicted with leprosy were ridiculed together.

> One day these three men visited a pawnshop and demanded the payment of thirty taels of silver. The pawnbroker could only come up with half the sum. The monks shouted at the man and were in the middle of an argument when an official named Hui passed by yelling at those who were in the way. After hearing a thorough explanation of what happened, his guards took the mendicants back to the police station where he interrogated them all. The official said, "You are not fully ordained. All the same you dare to extort money within this province. You are foolish not to fear the law." The official decided that each of them should be whipped twenty times. After these pronouncements, the magistrate turned to the monk and said, "You don't seem to have taken your final vows. I will take it upon myself to fulfill your wish." He then ordered a servant to completely shave off the mendicant's "eight thousand hairs of attachments." When the mendicant's head was completely shaven, he ordered the monk to put his hands together and pray like Lao Jielang. When these proceedings were over, he gave each one of them one silver coin for their services and forced them to leave his jurisdiction.

Although rowdy monks were troublesome, the journalists were even more perturbed by gullible lay followers. The performance of daily rituals and devotion to a particular Buddhist deity was not looked upon favorably by the editors of the *Feiyingge* pictorial. "Sending the Buddha to Heaven" explains that certain forms of worship were unacceptable to the local authorities. For reasons that the commentator does not clarify, the property of Baiyun temple in Ning district was confiscated by officials. Following this crack down, the head of the Zhao family began to strongly disapprove of his wife's devotion to a deity known as the Heavenly Physician.

[23] Ibid., p. 189.

One day Zhou told her husband that she dreamt the night before that an old man appeared to her. He claimed that he was the Heavenly Physician of the Baiyun temple and was about to be taken away. "If you can welcome me into your home, both you and your husband will stay healthy when you are one hundred," the old man assured the woman in her dream. The husband simply laughed and did not take her seriously.

The next day happened to be the first day of the month and Zhou went to pray and offer incense at a temple dedicated to Ksitigarbha. During her absence Zhao hired someone to get hold of the statue and started a fire in the back of the house to burn the Heavenly Physician. When his wife returned Zhao explained, "The human world is not a pure land. That's why it's better to send the deity to heaven. If I am punished for this sin, it is my own problem. You cannot interfere." His wife was frustrated and complained to herself for the rest of the day.

As is evident from the vignette above, in many of the articles religious revelations are communicated through dreams. Though it may seem inappropriate as journalism, it was not uncommon for the commentators to describe the content of their visions in detail. Dreams were regarded "as an indicator of pathological bodies invaded by 'pathogenic *qi*'" and the commentators of the *Dianshizhai* and *Feiyingge* pictorials offered their own interpretations, which frequently involved religious perspectives.[24] The various doctrines of Buddhism "frequently used the dream as a metaphor to point out the false, deceptive quality of the phenomenal world' while according to the Daoist perspective, dreams "not only provided contact with the external spirit world; they could also focus inwardly, permitting access to the spirits and demons of the microcosm."[25] Although the commentators were critical of organized religion in general, they clearly accepted such doctrinal understanding of dreams as legitimate knowledge.

Generally speaking the literati of Shanghai were extremely critical of monks living in cities and urban areas. Many of the vignettes talk about the Buddhist monks indulging in gambling and prostitution. Throughout these commentaries there is a sense that men and women were becoming monks not out of genuine religious motives but in order to avoid tax and corvee labor duties. In many articles

[24] Chen 2003, p. 153.
[25] Michel Strickmann 1988, pp. 35, 37.

Buddhist monks were scorned for not keeping their vows of celibacy. In one of the more sarcastic commentaries entitled "Everyone is Happy," the journalists talk about a temple where the monks and nuns were openly living together.

> On a certain day during the summer the magistrate of Quanzhou named Hu happened to stop by the temple to offer his prayers at this temple when he noticed that ten or so monks were living together and was shocked by this arrangement. Since he thought that it was better to allow human affection to take its natural course, instead of punishing them these Buddhist monks and nuns in accordance with the law, he acted as the go-between and ordered them to be laicized. In the end only one nun remained in the temple to offer incense and worship.

The journalists who worked for these pictorials claimed that they gathered information and interesting anecdotes from travelers and migrant workers who came from distant provinces. Many of them seem to have been from Guangdong where the language and culture was vastly different. The fact that the Guangdong area appears more frequently in the *Dianshizhai* and *Feiyingge* pictorials than any location outside of Shanghai shows that these inhabitants from the South China coast were clever competitors. Ever since the establishment of newspapers in China the question of the "otherness" has occupied a central position. By mobilizing convincing images and metaphors, Chinese journalists of the late Qing depicted Buddhist monks and nuns in ways that stuck.

Even though the journalists sometimes knew little about the inner life of the Buddhist monastic world, they were attune to popular sentiments which were critical toward the Buddhist sangha as a whole. The journalists certainly had access to Buddhist temples and communicated with lay and ordained monks, but Buddhism was sometimes perceived as a troublesome "other" because it stood in the way of modernization. Contrary to what has been written three or four decades ago about the intellectual appeal of the lay Buddhist movement, the pictorials of the late 19th century reveal that the literati were quite critical toward the various Buddhist sects. In a sense the Buddhist clergy at the end of the Qing period were perceived by Chinese urbanites and intellectuals in general to be rowdy and cunning monks. But within two decades the entire Buddhist clergy came under attack when the Manchu court issued a series of edicts ordering the confiscation of a vast amount of temple property, so it is necessary to carefully reassess the Manchu court's relation to

Buddhist clergy during the final decades of the Qing.

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